

SERVICE LEARNING

DEFINITION

Service learning combines community service with classroom instruction. It focuses on critical, reflective thinking as well as personal and civic responsibility. As an instructional strategy, service learning enhances already existing curricula. It offers teachers a tool that complements learning and increases educational relevancy. It is an approach that combines academic learning with service activities that are structured to address real needs in the community. Service learning offers youth a chance to solve problems and become involved in the community. It opens the door for students to practice what they have learned in school and allows students, as a learner, to make an impact through serving others. This teaching strategy gives students an active role in the community and provides contextual, real world learning experience. Service experiences should be engaging and meaningful. It is engaging when students are actively involved in selecting, planning and carrying out the activity. It is meaningful when it is tied to learning objective and meets real needs identified by the students, teachers and service recipients.

Elements of High Quality Service Learning

Integrated Learning

Integrated learning occurs when the service activity is linked to and enhances the important knowledge, value, skills or goals of the curriculum.

High Service

High service is achieved when the service meets a real need in the community. It is:

- Defined by the community
- Age appropriate
- Well organized
- Has a positive result

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- All students K-12
- Meet school guidelines for participation
- Complete required paperwork

LIABILITY EXPOSURE

Liability can be limited during service learning activities by:

- Explaining any safety procedures prior to experience
- Providing adequate supervision based on the hazards of site
- Obtaining completed transportation and parent consent forms

PREPARING STUDENTS

Students should be engaged in as many aspects of project planning as possible. Allow for students to actively select, plan and carry out the activity with guidance. Preplanning strengthens the learning process, prevents potential problems and helps students understand that the community is an extension of the classroom.

Before participating in the service learning activity, students should receive instruction in:

- Objective(s) of the project
- Type of equipment, procedures and processes to be used
- Behavior, courtesy and appropriate dress
- Items needed - notebook, pencil, lunch, etc.
- Safety issues
- Related assignments and due dates

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Obtain parental/teacher permission to participate
- Dress appropriately for the situation/site
- Follow safety and participation guidelines
- Come prepared with appropriate materials
- Participate in post experience reflection activities

COMMUNITY PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES

Collaboration involves schools, students, community agencies and local government. The active involvement of each partner helps to ensure that the services are meeting individual and community needs. Collaboration expands the opportunities and learning experiences available to young people. Collaboration should include the opportunity of working with diverse populations. This will provide a different perspective to students on cultures, attitudes and inter-generational communication.

- Sign any related forms
- Approve project objectives
- Review student progress
- Maintain open communication with students, school and parents

SCHOOL SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers must be knowledgeable about service learning and be able to connect the core curriculum to the related service.

- Obtain permission from appropriate parties to complete service learning project
- Set up transportation
- Provide a list of students for the office and chaperones
- Gather needed forms
- Introduce the concept of service learning
- Identify the curriculum ties
- Provide background information on content and service experience
 - Provide field study or guest speaker to prepare students
 - Students must learn about the subject, where they will be serving, and the people they will serve

- Students will also need to learn the issues behind the service needs and be given information on what the project will involve
- Inform community partner of expectations, time commitment and desired outcome of the experience so that they can properly prepare to give your students a successful experience
 - Meet needs of the agency/community
 - Let agency have an active voice in the planning, organizing and implementation of the project
- Assess effectiveness of the service learning activity
- Provide data to related personnel

SAMPLE FORMS

- *Student Evaluation Form*
- *Teacher Evaluation Form*
- *Site Evaluation Form*